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If you can't do teach: Exploring short-termism in the teaching profession

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on teacher motivation, and links short-term attitudes and behaviour among teachers to education quality. Using Sierra Leone as a case study, the data shows an overwhelming tendency for university graduates to use the teaching profession as a short-term option or stepping-stone to more desirable career paths. The paper thus hypothesises that in cases where teaching is viewed and utilised as a temporary undertaking, such short-termism negatively affects teacher performance, and ultimately student outcomes. Taken together, the physical presence and educational level of teachers are necessary conditions, but emotional and mental presence and commitment are also crucial factors in improving education quality. The paper thus offers a new interpretation which links teacher motivation and education quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education quality has been a key part of the discourse related to education policy in developed and developing countries alike. Teachers and teacher motivation have been central to this debate as teachers not only prepare students for the labour market, but are responsible for shaping youths, and by consequence society in the future. This is especially important in developing countries that are investing in human capital with the ambition to spur growth and development. As Eric Williams noted in his address to a newly independent Trinidad and Tobago almost 60 years ago, ‘the future of our nation is in the schoolbags of the youth’

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(Williams 1962). Like textbooks in the schoolbag, teachers also play a fundamental role in the development and nation-building push; and is thus the subject of the research.

This article focuses on teacher motivation, using Sierra Leone as a case study. The main aim of the paper is to link short-term behaviour among teachers to education quality. There is an existing body of research which seeks to understand the link between teachers and education quality. This has focused on the correlation between teacher knowledge and student performance (Avalos 2000; Metzler & Woessmann 2012; Sclafani 2010) and teacher absenteeism and student outcomes (Banerjee & Duflo 2006; Chaudhury et al. 2006; Kremer et al. 2005). Taken together, teachers that are physically present and of high quality should in theory be associated with improved student performance, all things equal. Given the global focus on quality education by national governments and the international development community (UN 2016), unpacking this widely held notion is of key importance for policy makers. This article attempts to do this by analysing teacher motivation, and exploring how teacher intrinsic desire to be a teacher relates to efforts and performance.

The paper hypothesises that in cases where teaching is used as stepping-stone for achieving a more desirable career, such short-termism negatively affects performance. It follows that without the inherent desire or motivation to be a teacher, policies to improve capacity and incentivise behaviour may have limited effects in the long-term due to high turn-over in the profession. The contribution of the paper is to explore these issues by analysing and reporting new empirical findings from the case study – Sierra Leone; and to offer a new interpretation which links teacher motivation and education quality. As such, the analysis offers both a theoretical contribution as well as key insights for education policy makers.

The paper utilises data collected from focus group discussions among university graduates in the capital Freetown. The graduates hail from a range of disciplinary backgrounds from

engineering to social sciences and the arts. In addition to focus group data, I also analyse data from the curricula vitae (CVs) of the research participants, and interview data from meetings with employers in the capital. With respect to definition, the term *teachers* in this manuscript, refers to teachers at the primary and/or secondary level, but not those at the tertiary or early childhood level.

Although Sierra Leone is used as a case study, the lessons and policy implications can be generalised to other contexts. Short-term attitudes toward a profession is often linked to traits of the profession such a status. This is shown to be true in the data analysed in this article. The issue of low-status among teachers is not unique to Sierra Leone and has surfaced as a topical issue in other developing and developed countries (Allen et al. 2019; Stromquist 2018). For example, of 15 Sub-Saharan African countries studied, only three - Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Lesotho - regarded teaching as a high-status profession; while in no European nor North American country was teaching selected as the most respected profession (Stromquist 2018: 14). The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section two gives an overview of research on teachers and education in developing countries. Section three gives an overview of the case study and the data and methods used. Section four presents the results and the implications for quality education and learning in developing countries. Section five concludes.

2. TEACHERS AND EDUCATION QUALITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The classification of education as a global public good and human right has influenced the policy discourse since 1945 (Daviet 2016). This perception laid the foundation for targets under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under the MDGs, the global development community aspired to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Though global enrolment increased from 83 per cent

in 2000 to 91 per cent in 2015, issues of quality of education and completion remain. According to the Brookings Institute, if current systems prevail, it will take the developing world 65 years to reach the current education levels that exist in developed countries (Winthrop & McGivney 2015).

The SGDs are more ambitious than the MDGs and aim to bridge not only the enrolment gap, but the attainment gap. The fourth SDG focuses on the quality and inclusiveness of education, with the goal to: ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (UN 2016). Research on teachers and education quality is thus integral to the current policy discourse.

Harbison & Hanushek (1992) classify three inputs into the education production function: (i) hardware – which includes physical infrastructure like school buildings, classrooms, furniture, sanitation, etc.; (ii) software – which include teaching resources such as curriculum design, pedagogy, textbooks, writing materials, etc.; and (iii) teachers – including teacher quality, effectiveness and distribution. Boissiere (2004) notes that management and institutional structure and student characteristics are likely fourth and fifth determinants of education outcomes.

This paper focuses on the third category – teachers, and in particular teacher motivation. Restricting the focus to teachers does not serve to discount the importance of the other input factors outlined by Boissiere (2004) and Harbison & Hanushek (1992). Instead, this piece serves to add to the evidence in the teacher domain, and complement other studies on the role of physical infrastructure, resources, institutional organisation and student traits – for instance see Ganimian & Murnane (2016) who review 223 studies between 2000 and 2015 that explore various interventions and the effect on outcomes such as student enrolment, attendance, repetition, dropout, retention, and/or achievement; Glewwe (2013) who survey

various aspects of education policy in developing countries; McEwan (2015) for evidence specific to primary education across 77 randomised experiments; or Lee & Zuze (2011) for evidence from four Sub-Saharan countries on school resources and academic performance.

The significance of teachers to the learning process in developed and developing countries has not been contested, and the evidence suggest teacher shocks have an impact on learning outcomes. For example, Das et al. (2007: 820) show that a five per cent increase in teacher absenteeism reduces average learning gains by four to eight per cent over the year. Given the importance of teachers, the academic literature and policy discourse have focused on maximising the returns to teaching by ensuring (i) teachers are well trained and (ii) incentivising attendance and good teacher performance. Interventions have included increasing salaries and modifying teacher contracts, developing teacher capacity, preparing lessons for teachers, and encouraging student-to-student teaching to compensate for low teacher capacity (Ganimian & Murnane 2016). Examples of each are described below.

In many developing countries, the 1990s and early 2000s saw an increasing focus on teacher training and professional development with a policy shift from getting students into schools and retaining them to quality of learning (Avalos 2000; Mulkeen et. al. 2007). Policies varied across countries and included free/subsidised further training, extra compensation for achieving professional certification, pedagogical excellence awards, and/or bonuses based on annual evaluations (Sclafani 2010). Such interventions are justified as evidence suggest that teacher knowledge has a statistically significant impact on student achievement (Metzler & Woessmann 2012).

Another focus area has been teacher attendance. Research on teacher absenteeism boomed in the 2000s with contributions from Banerjee & Duflo (2006), Chaudhury et al. (2006) and Kremer et al. (2005) to name a few influential studies. As these authors note, absent teachers

often imply lost education as children are made to return home at the primary level; or sit idle at the secondary level during the allocated subject period. The results from these studies indicate that teacher absence was correlated with being male, originating outside the school district, being unionised, and being employed in a school with lower infrastructure levels (Chaudhury et al. 2006). Monitoring and incentivising attendance reduced absenteeism (Banerjee & Duflo 2006); though Kremer et al. (2005) note that incentives must be tied to attendance and not professional grade as more senior higher paid teachers were more frequently absent.

Jayachandran (2014) argue that even when teachers attend school, institutional arrangements such as for-profit after-school classes, create perverse incentives and limit teacher effort during the regular school day. The results show that performance in national examinations are worse among students who cannot afford to enrol in after-school classes, suggesting that teachers should be discouraged from for-profit after-school teaching and encouraged to expand efforts during normal class times. Jayachandran's (2014) study used empirical evidence from Nepal, but such practices are not uncommon in other areas of the world – for example some Caribbean and African countries. One way to overcome these issues would be to link teacher salaries to student achievement, which has been shown to be effective at private schools in India (Kingdon & Teal 2007). Such performance related pay is not without problems in cases where teachers may be able to influence performance measures. Or in cases where non-measured outcomes are as important as measurable ones, but may be given less priority as they are not tracked and rewarded.

Applying a principle-agent framework, Levačić (2009) note the complex hierarchy and multiplicity of relationships in education. For example, teachers are accountable to the principal, but also to the parents. Some might argue that teachers are also accountable to students. The school's principal is in turn accountable to parents, the school's governing

body, several lines of authority and ultimately the Ministry of Education. Such complex relations affect incentive structures. Should teachers be incentivised by the Ministry of Education through salaries, or the school's principal using smaller rewards, or by parents and students by attaching value to high levels of student performance?

The literature has so far addressed external motivations through salaries and contract structures to incentivise teachers to acquire knowledge and attend classes. This paper focuses on intrinsic teacher motivation and how this relates to effort and performance of teachers. I postulate that in cases where teachers use teaching as a stepping-stone or temporary employment for achieving a more desirable career, such short-termism negatively affects performance. Without the inherent desire to be a teacher, policies to improve capacity and incentivise behaviour may have limited effects in the long-term.

3. CASE STUDY, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

The data used in this paper was collected as part of a wider project exploring occupational choice in Sierra Leone. The wider project explores transitioning from university to early career employment. During the data collection exercise, it was apparent that a significant portion of the sample was previously employed as a teacher, currently employed as a teacher, or planned to teach part-time until securing permanent employment. As such, though the data was not collected for the current article initially, the strength of the evidence led to the analysis that follows. Before continuing, the research context, data collection and analytical methods are briefly described.

3.1 Sierra Leone as a case study

Sierra Leone is a small West African country with a population of 7.6 million and GDP per capita of US\$500 (World Bank 2019). The population is relatively young, and a significant share of the population is of primary or secondary school age (SSL 2017). Due to

interruptions in education during the 1991 to 2002 civil war, it was not uncommon to find older children and young adults in classes for which they would otherwise be above the ‘normal’ age. There were also disruptions to education during the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in 2014 to 2016.

The country is categorised as ‘low human development’ by the United Nations, ranking 184 out of 189 in the 2018 Human Development Index (HDI). That said, there have been some gains in Sierra Leone. The expected years of schooling and mean schooling increased from 5.7 and 2.0 just after the war, to 9.8 and 3.5 in 2017 respectively (UNDP 2018). Access to education expanded with the number of schools, gross and net student enrolment increasing over time (GoSL 2018). Issues with completion and quality of education remain.

The Government has recognised this and has embarked on an ambitious policy to provide free quality education at the primary and secondary level to all students with a focus on ‘Service Delivery, Integrity and Learning’ (GoSL 2018). The current study is therefore timely as the government rolls out this programme; and is also useful to other countries reforming education with the hope of quality improvements.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The data was collected in two rounds – October to December 2017 and August 2018. In October and November 2017, CV data was collected from 170 recent university graduates, which document employment experience including the type of employment, the employment organisation and tenure. The 170 CVs were collected from a subset of 392 graduates who were randomly selected for the wider study. A subset of these 170 were then invited to a series of focus group discussions.

Additional focus group discussions were conducted in December 2017 and August 2018 with university graduates who had been in the labour market for up to twenty years. The

intention was to broaden the sample beyond recent graduates. Sampling for these participants entailed a mix of random sampling from a database housed at the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and snowball sampling.

Collectively, 14 focus group discussions were conducted with 70 participants – of which 36 were recent graduates and 34 had extended labour market experience. Participants include all disciplines across the university (Arts, Social Sciences, Pure and Natural Science and Engineering), save for health as health workers are more likely to become employed in the health sector rather than the education sector. Data from the focus group discussions and graduates' CVs form the basis of the analysis. I also analyse interview data on salaries across sectors based on interviews with 47 employers.

Given the sampling strategy, I do not attempt to make large generalisations, but to give evidence based on rich qualitative data of a phenomenon that exists, and one which education policy makers should be mindful of. Moreover, though the analysis is based on university graduates in Sierra Leone, lessons are likely applicable to other contexts where the teaching profession is relatively less desirable.

In the section that follows (and box 1 of the appendices), I present and make use of anonymised quotes. This is done to give evidence to the analysis and claims made in the discussion that follows, while simultaneously giving voice to the research participants. As Schler et al. (2009) note, the African voice and African identity has long been absent from research and discussions on labour and labour allocation on the continent.

4. SHORT-TERMISM IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

This section presents the findings from the data analysis. The section is organised in three parts, mapping out a statement and manifestation of short-termism among teachers, the

implications of short-termism to the education sector and finally, outlining ways in which more long-term behaviour can be incentivised based on the findings from the primary data.

4.1 Teaching as a stepping-stone or waiting room

‘Teaching is a waiting room. As soon as another job comes up, they leave.’

Focus Group Discussion October, 2017

The above quote is short but salient, reflecting the perception of many university graduates. At least one graduate in every focus group was currently teaching or planned to teach at a public or private school, using this as a stepping-stone or ‘waiting room’ until a more attractive opportunity arose. These sentiments were reflected across disciplinary specialisation; and is true even for those who specialise in courses like Community Development and Adult Education which are directly related to teaching.

One of the questions from the focus group discussion asked respondents how they survive or earn a living while searching for permanent employment. A word cloud of the raw data is shown in Figure 1. From the data, teaching was the most frequently cited survival strategy. In the illustration, words with a common derivative have been grouped together. For example, ‘teach’ and ‘teaching’ appear as ‘teaching’ as the interpretation is the same. ‘School’ was the third most popular word mentioned (after ‘job’), which is also related to teaching. According to one respondent: ‘I could not find a job when I graduated so I created my own job. Some friends and I started an NGO and a small school. Then I taught for a few years before getting my Government job’ (Focus Group Discussion, August 2017). Box 1 of the appendix provides additional extracts from the data.

Teaching is therefore an avenue to obtain formal work experience and an inflow of income, while simultaneously applying for other jobs. The qualitative data suggests that vacancies in private primary and secondary schools arise more frequently than those in public institutions, and the rate of job creation in the teaching sector is high relative to other formal sectors. University graduates are especially in high demand for these vacancies given low teacher quality in Sierra Leone. According to World Bank data, a significant proportion of teachers in Sierra Leone are unqualified as 41 per cent of males and 28 per cent of female teachers lacked formal teaching qualification or were teaching with a qualification below the required standard in 2016 (Global Partnership for Education 2019).

There is also evidence of informal teaching as a means of self-employment. For example, some graduates offer one-on-one or small group tutoring sessions to primary, secondary or even university students. In these cases, tutoring as a means of employment often commenced while the respondent was enrolled at the university, and continued after graduation.

In addition to generating income which can be used for other job search activities, teaching affords graduates time to engage in search. One graduate noted his ability to get a full-time relatively well-paid role at one of the international schools in the country. The position, however, was full-time with a workload that was not conducive to searching for other jobs, and therefore declined by the respondent.

Leveraging teaching to gain experience is not unique to recent graduates, but a phenomenon that occurs prior to graduation and persist for many years after graduating. Many respondents communicated the belief that teaching experience increases the chances of securing other government jobs. Of the 170 CVs of recent graduates analysed, 42 (24.7 per cent) had some level of teaching experience before graduating. Experience was mainly at non-governmental

teaching institution (29 out of 42), with the balance at government schools. This is not surprising as only 14 per cent of schools in Sierra Leone are government owned (Universalia 2018: 6). Males were also more likely to have teaching experience prior to graduation - 36 males in comparison to six females. This male to female ratio of 6:1 is far larger than the university student population and sample ratio of 2:1.

For some more experienced participants, teaching became a longer-term option even though the intention was short term. One participant recalled being employed as a teacher for 14 years. Despite this lengthy tenure, the ambition was always a government job in the capital Freetown, which the respondent ultimately secured and promptly quit his teaching role. Similar tales were told by others with fewer years of teaching experience.

The terminology used by respondents also reflect their attitude to teaching. Participants referred to teaching as an intermediate option wanting jobs that were 'permanent' or engaging in teaching because there are 'no jobs'. Factually these statements are incorrect as the existence of teaching positions indicate that there are indeed some jobs, and oftentimes, these positions are more stable than reportedly more desirable employment in the development sector. Harris (2018) explores the overwhelming preference for employment in the development sector in Sierra Leone.

The relegation of teaching to a last option – in perception, vocal expressions and actions - by many, indicates the undesirability of the teaching profession in Sierra Leone among university graduates. The reasons for this phenomenon needs to be better understood in order to guide education policy. This is discussed in sub-section 4.3. In the next sub-section, I discuss the implication of short-termism on the quality of education.

4.2 Implications of using teaching as a short-term option

Research on short-termism in education has focused on the duration of teacher training programmes and the effect on teacher knowledge and student performance (Derri et al. 2015; Ha et al. 2015). I postulate that of equal or greater significance is the short-term approach to teaching in developing countries like Sierra Leone. In essence, if a vast share of teachers does not see the teaching profession as a long-term career option, the education system will likely suffer as a consequence.

Research on short-termism as a topic in itself has often focused on economic factors, corporate environments and trade-offs between long-term and short-term gains - see Marginson & McAulay (2008) for example. I borrow some of the terminology from this literature in the discussion that follows thus linking short-termism in teaching to high turnover, sub-optimal investment in teacher development, low motivation, limited mental/emotional presence, and ultimately, student performance that is below potential. In so doing, I embed short-termism as a central factor to some of the well-established challenges in the teacher service (Figure 2).

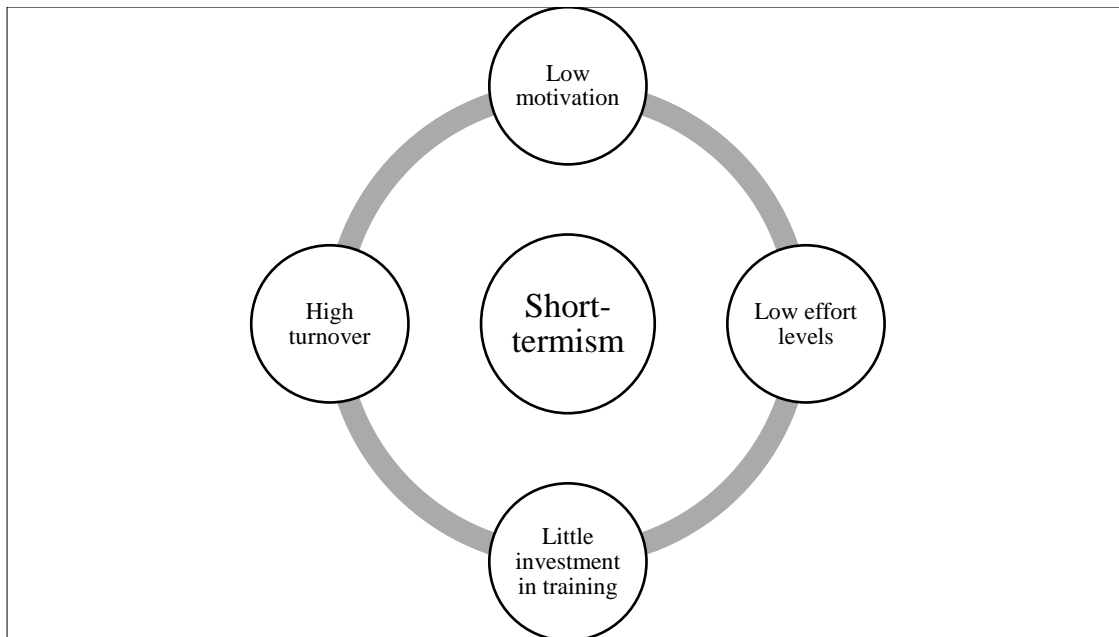


Figure 2: Short-termism at the heart of challenges in the teaching profession

Firstly, the qualitative data collected in this study suggest high rates of turnover as teachers enter the profession and exit when better opportunities arise. There is no official data on teacher attrition in Sierra Leone, but the 2013 Education Status Report note that retention, incentives and absenteeism distress service delivery in the education sector (GoSL 2013). Specific to retention, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) notes its observation of teachers exiting the profession for better pay and working conditions elsewhere and as such, has highlighted retention a key management challenge (GoSL 2013).

The findings in this paper are consistent with the MEST's story, and may be one explanation of the observed high levels of unqualified teachers in the profession. As noted above, 41 per cent of male and 28 per cent of female teachers lacked formal teaching qualification or were teaching with a qualification below the required standard in 2016 (Global Partnership for Education 2019). Such a situation likely results if, for instance, the rate of turnover is highest among the highest qualified/skilled university graduates; with lower quality teachers remaining in the profession as their outside options are fewer.

Secondly, if we consider short-termism in the teaching field through the lenses of being impatient or present-biased in the role, some of the challenges observed in the teaching profession can be explained based on previous research on career choices and individual time-preferences. Research on time preferences and the link to career investment suggest that impatient people are less likely to invest in human capital (Cadena & Keys 2015), less likely to exert effort on the job (van Huizen & Alessie 2015) and more likely to engage in job-search while currently employed and consequently switch to other jobs (Drago 2006). The latter of the three substantiates the claim on higher turnover above. The former two point to implications for investment in teacher development and motivation.

There has been little investment by the Government in Sierra Leonean teachers despite the high needs to improve teacher quality (Amman & O'Donnell 2011). Interviewees who were employed as teachers reported little desire to invest in teacher training and development themselves. This arose for two reasons. First the short-term focus implies a financial and time trade-off between investments in pedagogical training versus searching for other jobs. And secondly, given the low levels of skills in the service overall, there are little incentives to make improvements at the individual level.

Thirdly, the revealed behaviour of using teaching as a short-term option also relates to the psychological construct of 'presence'. There are several typologies as discussed in (Lee 2004). At the heart of these classifications is the notion of 'being there', which in turn involves certain levels of behavioural engagement (Biocca et al. 2001). Phrases such as 'waiting ground', 'always looking for something better' or 'you always want more' as expressed by respondents (see Box 1), suggest incomplete or imperfect mental and emotional presence. The data suggest that for many, a share of their mental and emotional load was absent from teaching activities as they devote cognitive space to exploring more desirable options. In essence, the reality of being physically present in the classroom does not imply

nor perfectly correlate with ‘being there’ mentally and emotionally, which in turn has implications for teacher motivation and behaviour.

Taken together, the end result is likely to be poor or below optimum student performance in contexts like Sierra Leone where short-termism in the teaching service leads to high turnover of teachers; a higher share of unqualified teachers with limited outside options being retained; and low levels of investment, motivation and effort from teachers that are impatient and anxiously awaiting/actively seeking out the next best opportunity.

4.3 From short-term career filler to long-term career option

‘If you ask a graduate to teach, they say you don’t like me. It’s a last option.’

Focus Group Discussion August, 2018

The implications from the analysis above are fairly dystopian and reinforce a vicious cycle. If short-termism among teachers lead to the production of lower-quality students; students are taught by low-quality teachers and then become the teachers of the future (and other members of the labour force). Tackling short-termism in graduates’ attitudes to teaching and promoting teaching as a viable career option is thus central to education policy.

Respondents listed salary, contract stability, making a contribution to society, social status, opportunities for training and career progression, and opportunities for travel as important factors in the labour supply decisions generally. From the interviews and focus group discussions, three resolutions are presented below based on stated unattractiveness or missing benefits available to teachers that were reported.

Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the remuneration for teaching given the workload required. As

Table 1 shows, the lowest entry level salary reported based on interviews with employers was teachers' salaries. Even the upper end of the entry level range for teachers in Sierra Leone was below other sectors. Improving remuneration in the field is thus one strategy for minimising short-termism; and an issue which has caused strike action in recent times (Awoko 2018).

| Sector | Minimum reported baseline salary | Maximum reported baseline salary |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Private sector | \$173 | \$ 467 |
| Public sector | \$120 | \$ 653 |
| Development sector | \$100 | \$1000 |
| Teaching | \$ 67 | \$ 300 |

Table 1: Comparison of remuneration for entry level teaching positions with other sectors
(Source: interview data)

Moreover, teaching was viewed as having low social status in comparison to other professions – in particular employment in the development sector and working for central government. Low status in the teaching profession has long existed. In 1966, the United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) developed recommendations concerning the status of teachers. The subject is also not unique to Sierra Leone and has surfaced as a topical issue in other developing and developed countries. Of 15 Sub-Saharan African countries studied, only three - Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Lesotho - regarded teaching as a high-status profession; while in no European nor North American country was teaching selected as the most respected profession (Stromquist 2018: 14).

The low prestige associated with teaching has been attributed to the semi-professionalisation of the discipline. Globally, teachers are not seen to be as ‘professional’ as doctors and lawyers, but marginally more professional when compared to nurses, police officers and bank tellers (Stromquist 2018; Ballantine and Spade 2008). Policies to tackle low status and the semi-professional image of teaching range from shifting community attitudes as a more bottom-up approach, to raising the profile of teachers in a more top-down manner (Allen et al. 2019; Hoyle 2001).

And finally, respondents described opportunities for training and career progression in the teaching service as minimal in comparison to other career paths. It thus becomes a ‘chicken and egg’ situation as limited training opportunities reduce the attractiveness of the profession leading to short-term entrants into the service, who then minimise their level of training, either by not self-initiating or not placing higher demands on the government.

Hargreaves (2009) note that the issue of teacher status is often associated with salaries and the image and competence of teachers; thus implying interdependence between the three resolution points above and the need for holistic policy formulation to tackle a complexity of related issues.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The need for quality education in developed and developing countries is not contested. With respect to developing countries, based on the literature reviewed in this article, there has been increased discussion on teacher quality and teacher motivation in the academic literature and policy discourse, as both teacher quality and motivation have been associated with student outcomes. This research adds to this body of literature by highlighting the importance of short-termism in attitudes of teachers; and the implications this has on the profession and ultimately student outcomes.

This article has argued that in addition to previously established factors such as teacher knowledge and reduced absenteeism, another important criterion is the desire to be a teacher as a chosen career. Such an inherent desire or intrinsic motivation may be lacking in many developing countries with limited employment opportunities. Lack of desire to be a teacher in the longer-term or having a short-term approach to teaching, may imply that physical presence in the classroom (or reduced absenteeism) does not equate to mental and emotional presence/commitment, and high teacher quality or knowledge is not tantamount to intrinsic motivation to utilise those qualities or skills.

The evidence shows an overwhelming use of teaching as a survival mechanism and short-term employment option for graduates in Sierra Leone as they continue to search for better jobs. The unattractiveness of the teacher profession as a long-term option is rooted in a mismatch between graduates' desires and characteristics of the profession. In particular, targeting relatively low remuneration packages, low social status and limited training opportunities (linked to career progression) in the Sierra Leonean teaching service could serve to improve the attractiveness of teaching as a viable profession among university graduates, and ultimately bring gains to the education system.

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APPENDICES

Box 1: Data Extracts

‘I graduated in 1999. This was just when the war was finishing. There were no jobs. I taught at a primary school for 14 year in the rural areas. This was just a waiting ground. I was always looking for something better. After 14 years I got a job working for the Government in Freetown’

‘As for me, I taught for 3 years after I graduated in 2006. I was always applying. The search began as soon as I graduated. I was given a form by a friend. This is how I got this job. I never really wanted to teach.’

‘I was also a teacher before. For 3 years. The forms are not given out every year. But it is not easy to get your hands on it. There are a fixed number of forms. And you cannot photocopy it. Each form has a serial number on it. HRMO is part of the process, but indirectly. Those with teaching experience were priorities for government jobs.’

‘I started teaching at a private school in 4th year of my degree. They like to recruit engineers to teach the sciences. But then I got an internship at a manufacturing company so I left. Then I worked for an IT company, an engineering company and now the Government.’

‘I did my Higher Teacher Certificate training before continuing here (at university). I started teaching. With knowledge, you always want more. I came to engage with knowledge. I still have a job as a teacher. But when I finish, I will be a lawyer.’

‘It is very difficult to get a job these days. For us, the sciences, the easy way is to teach. I was teaching Physics and Further maths. I went with no paper. I had not graduated yet. But they gave me a job as a volunteer. They observed my teaching and then asked me to formally apply. Then I got the job. There are lots of vacancies at the good schools, but it’s full time and we don’t want that. The salary is \$120 per month. I was part-time so I would have time off. The other schools like the private ones pay about \$280, but the workload is too much. You have to prepare lesson plans. I don’t want to teach only. I want to have time for engineering. With engineering when the contract comes you get money.’

‘No man is indispensable. But you can make yourself indispensable by increasing your education. I did university to make myself relevant to society. I don’t want to be u-u: untrained and unqualified. I was referred to, so I went for the first degree. I did not want to go to teaching again. I thought for ten years before. Then I worked in an NGO. I wanted to improve my social and financial status so I went for law. You see some of them with big cars and houses.’